



The Winning Application

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APPLYING FOR JUDICIAL CLERKSHIPS

It's not a sprint, it's a marathon.

It starts with networking!

Applicants must go where the Judges go

- Bar Association events, Federal Bar Assoc.
- Diversity events (Latinas in the Law)
- Judge's events in chambers (Chai Chat)
- Conferences, Judicial Clerkship Program
- Continuing education seminars
- Hockey rink, church socials, beach clean ups

Applicants must conduct informational interviews

- Meet with attorneys, and former or current law clerks.
- One informational interview should lead to another and another.

Applicants must work closely with professors and Career Services Office

- Students must get to know professors early on in law school career.
- Career Advisors must be familiar with judicial assistants, law clerks, staff attorneys and judges.

CAREER ADVISORS SHOULD KEEP IN TOUCH WITH CHAMBERS VIA EMAIL OR TELEPHONE REGARDING EXTERNSHIP AND CLERKSHIP HIRING

Use an Externship or Clerkship Survey to find out:

- Hiring preferences and timeline
- Required application materials

So you're saying that you are at the top of the class and on Law Review . . .

- High class rank and Law Review is not enough
- In 2011, there were over 37,000 applicants for 98 positions in California
- Applicants must set themselves apart
- TYPOS will kill any application
- Applicants must clean up online presence

RESUME

- One page
- Two pages okay for Ph.D., M.D. or significant prior work experience
- Show work on novel legal issues
- Evidence of drafting legal documents
- Show life experience beyond simply taking exams (Travel, CrossFit, volunteer work)

RESUME

- Can analyze issues and prepare concise well-reasoned memoranda
- Show case management skills
- Class standing is important
- Law Review
- Judicial externship experience

COVER LETTER

- One page
- Shows writing style
- Don't repeat resume
- If there is a genuine connection to the Judge or chambers, it should be stated in the cover letter
- "Professor Smith recommended that I apply to your chambers"
- "I spoke with your former law clerk, Jill Jones"

COVER LETTER

- Should be tailored to the Judge or show specific interest to chambers
- Show diverse background or why applicant is different

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- General rule: the longer, the better
- A Career Advisor needs to intervene when the letter is not good enough
- Applicant should provide their recommenders with their resume and writing sample
- Can't be done at the last minute

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- Some Judges rely solely on the word of another judge, a trusted professor or lawyer friend who has experience with a student
- Letter should indicate candidate's ability to write well and analyze issues
- From prominent tenured faculty who will follow up personally after the application is sent

WRITING SAMPLE

- Writing sample should have cover page that explains the topic or assignment, and should state that the work is unedited
- Obviously, watch out for typos and grammatical errors
- Showcase the ability to be objective and organized

WRITING SAMPLE

- Maybe a Law Review article? Maybe not . . .
- Best writing sample addresses topics that interest the Judge or the law clerks
- Law clerks, who review the writing samples, stop reading after 5 pages

THE WINNING PHONE SCREEN

- In the phone screen, law clerks are looking to see whether the candidate will be a good fit in chambers
- Candidate should be enthusiastic
- Candidate should be able to answer the question: Why are you interested in this chambers?
- Candidate should ask questions of her own

THE WINNING INTERVIEW

- Once offered an interview, candidate should come out to interview as quickly as possible
- Prepare, prepare, prepare
- Read the Judge's books, articles, cases; scour Lexis and Westlaw
- Participate in mock interviews
- "If offered, I would accept the position"

SOMETIMES IT TAKES A FORTUNATE STROKE OF SERENDIPITY

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